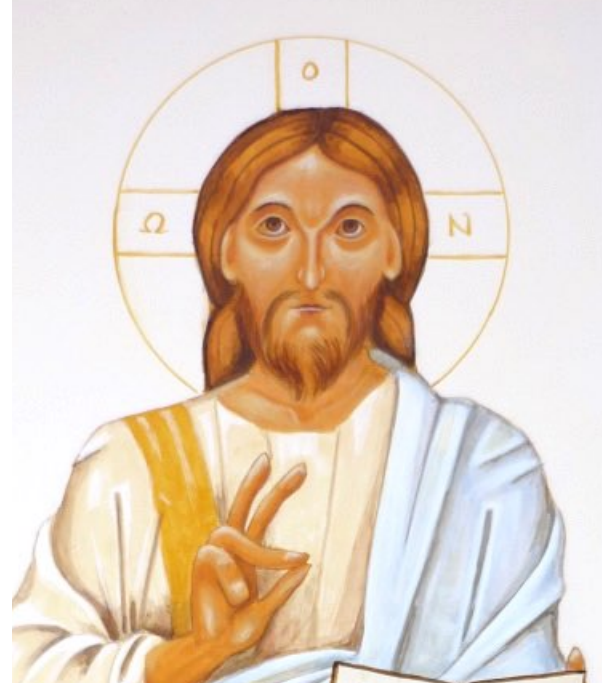


# Spirituality audit

## Part 1: Personal



c Artotem / wiki



c RMMT

### Reflective prayer practice

Stopping to think can help us realise that we have been coasting along in a relationship. We need to spend time and involve the other person more in what's important to us, if we want the relationship to flourish. Relating to God is no different.

What follows are some detailed questions to help you get your prayer life into focus: it's suggested that you use those that are helpful for you; don't feel you have to answer them all. This exercise is not supposed to make you feel guilty, but to help you see more clearly what it is you actually do at the moment.

Later you may choose to take a second step and decide whether it would be right to change your practice in some ways. It might be that what worked well in the past no longer fits so well, and that something different might draw you closer to God.

The first question to ask is:

**How has my prayer life made me love God more and my neighbour more?**

## 1. Questions relating to where you are in your life at the moment

Perhaps you're familiar with stepping back and taking a look at yourself; you might not need these questions in that case. If it's not such a familiar thing to relate your sense of God to what's going on in your life, these questions might be helpful.

**When did you feel closest to God in the last 12 months?**

And when furthest away?

How did you pray about this?

Can you say why things have changed, if they have changed?

What things in your life have challenged or encouraged you more recently?

How did you reflect on them in prayer?

Are there factors in your life that get in the way of relating to God, or work against it?

*(could be leisure activities, family or friends, your daily work...)*

Are there factors that help you deepen your faith because they are challenging and make you reflect and pray more?

Are there anxieties that you are carrying?

*(e.g. health, money, dissatisfaction with your life)*

How does prayer and/or church involvement help you with the challenges of daily life?

Is there something missing that you would like, in order to help you with the challenges of daily life?

What would you like to give thanks for?

Where have you experienced the support and encouragement of God?

*(you may experience this as the close presence of Jesus, or a sense of the Holy Spirit, or a connection to the transcendent Father)*

## 2. Questions relating to the way you prefer to pray

Everybody's different, so everybody prays to God in their own way. *What* you do is not as important as the fact that you spend quality time with God regularly. It may not be more than five minutes if your life is very full, e.g. looking after small children: it's the quality that counts and the fact that you do it as often as you realistically can. The way you pray will depend on your temperament and also on the outward circumstances of your life: for example, if your life is pressured and full of constant interactions, you may prefer a quiet, listening type of prayer even if you are an extravert. Another example: some very reserved people enjoy forms of prayer that stimulate the emotions, because it gives them a chance to let this part of them come to the surface. Other reserved people prefer a more sober style, e.g. a daily office.

And some of us like to mix and match: for example, I might have a daily Quiet Time in the morning which involves engaging my mind with the text of scripture, using a commentary. That would be my designated 'prayer time'. But I might also like to walk my dog on the beach, just freewheeling with God and letting all sorts of thoughts pass across my mind. I'm praying then too, even if some of my attention is watching the dog running about. We don't limit our engaging with God to the time which we set aside just for prayer.

### Do you set aside time with God every day?

*(just for God, i.e. not while driving or walking the dog)*

Does this include some Bible reading? If not every day, how many times a week?

About how long?

Do you use a set form of words, e.g. Common Worship Daily Prayer?

If you include silence, is this a time for reflecting or just being?

Is your time with God like a traditional 'Quiet Time' (some Bible study, some personal prayer)?

If your daily prayer doesn't fit well into either of these categories, how might you describe it?

What proportion of your daily prayer is: Adoration / Contrition / Thanksgiving / Supplication? *(or use a different model)*

Is your personal response to God usually focused on one particular Person of the Trinity?

If so, can you say why this might be?

What is your preferred style of prayer? Can you relate this to your personality type?

Do you also pray in ways that might not be your first preference?

*(e.g. in special circumstances such as on retreat or on holiday)*

How does the corporate worship of your home church relate to your personal style of prayer?

*(those services that you attend, if there are some that you don't attend)*

If there is a close match, where are you being stretched and encouraged to explore unfamiliar or uncomfortable ways of relating to God?

If there is not a close match, where are you being fed and supported in praying and relating to God?

Do you regularly supplement your attendance at public worship with:

- private spiritual reading
- attendance at quiet days
- retreats
- attendance at teaching holidays (New Wine, Greenbelt)
- discipleship teaching (Bishop's Foundation Course, Exploring Christianity)
- visits to a spiritual director
- keeping a spiritual journal
- small group (house group) membership
- other forms of reflection on your active Christian service?

Where do you feel comfortable in your prayer life, and where do you feel you would like to grow more?

How has your experience of God in prayer *challenged* you in relation to your active service (in the church or in the world), in the last twelve months?

How has your experience of God *encouraged* you in relation to your active service (in the church or in the world), in the last twelve months?

*(active service means whatever is appropriate to your circumstances and can include caring at home, a great service to community life)*

Where would you like to be in relation to God in three years' time?

Can you think of the next step you need to take?

# Spirituality audit

## Part 2: Corporate



c Basher Eyre / geograph



c Ben Mizen/ flickr

### Your home church

The questions are not intended in a spirit of criticism, but to help you step back and see familiar things with fresh eyes. Community life is 'the art of the possible' and there may be good reasons for keeping things that you would prefer to change. On the other hand, sometimes people begin an initiative in faith, even though there don't appear to be the resources there for it, and God then draws out a surprising response. So if you feel the time is right to review prayer in the parish, this audit may be of help. Use the questions that are relevant and helpful and don't feel you have to answer everything.

How important is prayer in the weekly round of parish life? (score 1-5)

How many hours of public worship are offered?

How well supported are prayer and worship events other than the main Sunday service?

What other prayer events take place? Are they aimed at particular interest groups?

*(e.g. healing prayer, bereavement group with prayer, nursing home service)*

What proportion of those people who attend them are people who do not attend on Sunday morning?

How many of these events take place in the church or church hall, how many off site?

What proportion of corporate prayer and worship in the parish is: Adoration / Contrition / Thanksgiving / Supplication? *(or use a different model)*

What proportion of corporate prayer and worship is quiet and self-reflective, particularly attractive to introverts?

*(include portions of services: a jolly family service might have 5 minutes of deeply focused quiet prayer)*

What proportion of corporate prayer and worship is stimulating and participatory, particularly attractive to extraverts?

*(again include portions: traditional BCP choral evensong might end with a rousing congregational hymn)*

What proportion of corporate prayer and worship has a strong emphasis on an *emotional* response?

What proportion of corporate prayer and worship has a strong emphasis on an *intellectual* response?

What proportion of corporate prayer and worship has a strong emphasis on a *practical* response?

**What teaching on prayer has there been in the last 12 months?**

When was there last a parish retreat / awayday / pilgrimage / group going to New Wine or Greenbelt etc.?

What training is offered to those who lead prayer?

*(e.g. intercessions, small group leaders, prayer ministry team)*

How are choir, band members, servers trained to see their contribution to worship as in the service of a greater whole?

How many parishioners have attended *Inspire* or some other spirituality course, and how have they fed this into the life of the parish?

**What speaks of prayer to a stranger entering the church?**

*(e.g. well presented intercessions book, prayer tree or other focus for personal intercession, prayer corner with candles, prayer cards or similar)*

What, in your view, does the parish do well in this area?

Where do you see room for development?

Where would you like the parish community to be in five years' time, relating to prayer and spirituality?



# Spirituality audit

## Part 3: Bringing the two together



Both images c Portsmouth diocese

### You and your church

We truly pray together when we make the prayer of the community our own personal prayer. Sometimes this involves compromises, either because of our preferences, or because we take on a responsible role and aren't fully free to relax and relate to God during the main Sunday service. Certainly many clergy, because they hold everything together on a Sunday, get more spiritual 'mileage' out of quiet midweek services than Sunday morning.

But praying together has an important role: it is where we bring the work of the week to be blessed by God and honoured by the community of which we are a part. No-one can be a Christian on their own.

So the questions in this section are to help you tease out your own personal spiritual experience within the corporate prayer of the church.

Does your church involvement mean that attending Sunday worship is 'work' in some sense? *(e.g. choir, server, intercessor, Sunday school teacher)*

If so, where do you get the additional spiritual and theological input that you need, where you can just be on the receiving end?

How is your service of God (in the world or in the church) acknowledged or celebrated by the church community?

**How does your personal life of prayer and service relate to your involvement with your church community?**

How do you 'give back' to the community?

*(For some this may be an external form of service, for some it may be prayer, and some may be bringing up small children or nursing a relative, which is the form their service takes.)*

How do you receive from the community?

*(it is more difficult to receive than to give)*

Is there anything that you would like to change about communal prayer that would help you personally encounter God?

# Spirituality audit

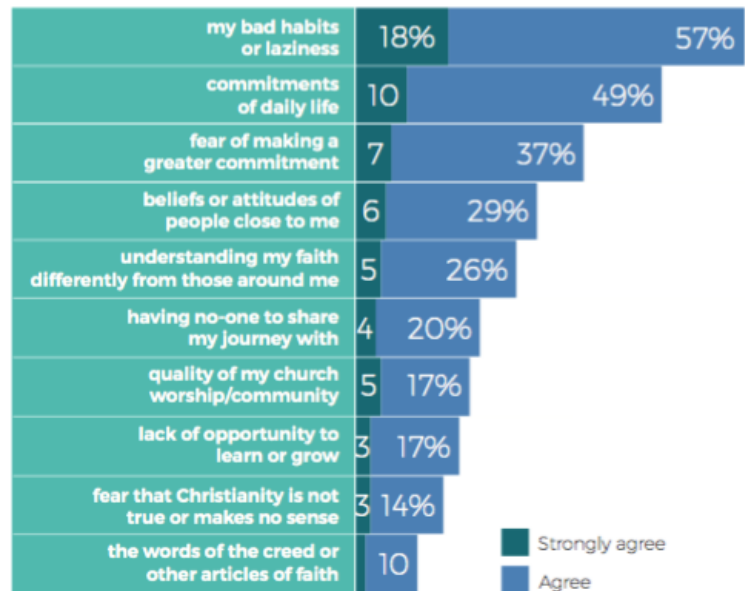
## Part 4: Christian formation

Image c Saltley Trust

'What helps disciples grow?'

(a survey of 1,191 Christians from 30 churches in the West Midlands)

Chart 7: My Christian journey has been hampered by...



### Living as disciples

Prayer is just one aspect of our Christian life. It undergirds our active service and our engagement with other Christians in friendship, study and mutual support. 'Formation' is a word borrowed from the monastic tradition, and it expresses the fact that the whole person is engaged when we grow as Christians. We study, we pray, we get involved in practical expressions of love and service - and so we are shaped, formed, in the likeness of Christ.

People prefer different ways of growing as disciples. Some like to interact with groups and will choose a Bible study group or other small group, and perhaps go away to a Christian conference now and again. Some like to learn in a more study-focused way and enjoy courses and reading or studying the Bible by themselves. Some like to grow in their discipleship through practical engagement. This could be campaigning for social justice in the community, either as individuals or through the church, or engaging in interfaith dialogue, or simply through a hobby. It doesn't have to have a Christian label to help us grow as Christians, if it throws up ethical questions we ponder on, or makes us think about goodness, truth and beauty, as films or other art often do.

It's important to look at the whole of your life to make sure you're not missing out one aspect. Many people are confident in their ability to relate to others, but unsure about how to draw closer to God in prayer when they're by themselves. This is what the spirituality audit is meant to help with.

You could consider drawing up an audit for public engagement or studying the faith as well.

Ask yourself:

where am I getting it right as a Christian?

where do I need to grow some more?

what can I celebrate about God working through me for others?

what gives me joy in my faith?

what fear could I ask Jesus to help me overcome?

what will help me be better at noticing the good things that are already there, and so be energised for the other parts of my life?

As we grow in confidence in God's support in our lives, we will learn to be 'glass half full' people who look for an opportunity to give thanks at all times, as St Paul encourages us to do (e.g. 1 Thess 5.18).

